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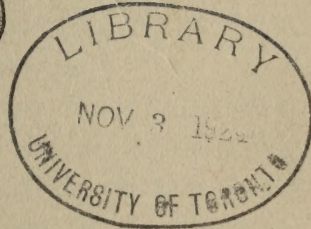


The Issues of the War

BY

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Former Secretary of War



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ADDRESS BY HENRY L. STIMSON.

THE ISSUES OF THE WAR.

We are here tonight as citizens of a great self-governing republic to discuss our duties and obligations in the most important issue which could confront a nation. We are on the threshold of war. Our country has been ordered off the sea and our government has refused to obey the order. Our ships—sixteen of them—have been attacked or sunk because we insisted upon exercising the right of freemen upon a free ocean. Nearly 200 of our citizens, men, women and children have lost their lives for doing what they had a right to do under the law of nations as it has existed for five hundred years. In no single one of the five great wars which this nation has waged, nor in all of them put together, has there been as provocation, such a list of official murders as that which today we lay as an indictment against the German Empire.

Yet, that is not all. The cause of the great issue in which America is now taking up its arms lies further back. These outrages, these murders, intolerable as they are, are not the origin of the feeling which has been developing in the heart of America against the Government guilty of them. America is not going to war with Germany merely because, as one of the accidents of the great struggle raging across the water, we have suffered an incidental injury, gross and unbearable as that injury may be. It is not for that reason that ever since this war began thousands of our young men have been drifting across the border into

Canada to offer their services under another flag. It is not for that reason that 25,000 of these young men are now fighting for the Allies on the Von Hindenberg line. It is not for that reason that thousands more have been succoring the wounded behind the lines in France. It is not for that reason that an American Commission has been devoting its time, its strength and its energy towards succoring enslaved and starving Belgium. Ah! No, my friends, desire for vengeance is not the impelling motive of American action. There is a far deeper cause than that for our sympathy with one side in this great struggle. It is because we realize that upon the battlefields of Europe there is at stake the future of the free institutions of this world. It is because we feel and know that should the tide of that bloody struggle turn against the Allies the cause of democracy—even here in far-off America—would go down with them.

My friends, there are two and only two great systems of government in this world of ours, and those systems are at grips along the battle line in Europe. One of those systems is based upon the principle stated in our Declaration of Independence that individual men have certain inalienable rights and that governments are instituted to secure those rights and exist only for that purpose. That system is based upon the principle that the individual man is the responsible source of governmental power and that all the rights of government must come from him. That was the principle upon which our fathers stood when they rebelled against the Stamp Tax in 1765; that was the principle upon which their fathers stood when they rebelled against the Ship Money Tax of Charles I in 1640.

The other system is based upon the theory that all rights belong to the State and that the citizen has only what the State is willing to give him. That is the theory of the divine right of kings and monarchs. That is the theory upon which Bismarck stood when he enforced the tax for the army budget in 1862 even after the people's representatives in the House of Delegates of Prussia had rejected that budget and when the people of Germany yielded to that unlawful tax they yielded to that theory of government—government by autocracy. That is the theory which the present Kaiser voiced when he said at Koenigsberg:

“Considering myself the instrument of the Lord, without being misled by the views and opinion of the day, I go my way.”

And that was the theory upon which the present Chancellor on August 4th, 1914, justified the invasion of Belgium when he said in substance: We violate the law but the necessity of a State knows no law.

That is the theory upon which all autocracy must rest, both in its dealings with its own subjects and in its dealings with the rest of the world.

It was no accident that Germany denied to other neutral nations the right to stand against the convenience of her action. Once let it be admitted that the individual has no rights which his government must respect, all other collections of individuals, all foreign or neutral nations must fall under the same disability. The neutral rights of Belgium, of Holland, of America, as against Germany, were lost the moment the individual Prussian subject surrendered his standing to his king. Thus it is due to no accident of naval situa-

tion or warfare that all of the ruthlessness, the deaths and the drownings are chargeable to one of the belligerents alone. It is an inevitable result of the ultimate principle of government upon which that nation acts.

These are the two systems of government which are in mortal conflict today. Can any one say that America is not vitally interested in such a struggle? The world is too small today to maintain within it two systems governing human relations which are so antagonistic and so mutually destructive. With every new development which brings men closer together, the issue only becomes more acute.

Nearly sixty years ago, Abraham Lincoln said:

“A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided; it will become all one thing or all the other.”

My friends, that is the situation in the world today. The struggle between autocracy and democracy—between government from above and government from beneath—is an “irrepressible conflict” as inevitable as the issue between slavery and freedom was in this country sixty years ago and that struggle must go on until the world is either all slave or all free.

Until three weeks ago, the alliance of Russia with the three great democracies engaged on the side of individual liberty in this struggle, seemed a mockery which made the whole issue appear a sham. But now we know that it was our own vision which was faulty. Underneath the surface was working the ferment which had reduced the age-long government of the Czar to

an egg-shell ready to crumble at a touch. And, lo! under the influence of the struggle the touch has come. Out of the caldron of war has issued another great democracy vindicating its position on the side of freedom. Into such a struggle a man or nation may well go with a lofty faith and burning ardor—

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;

Some great cause, God’s new Messiah offering each the bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right;

And the choice goes by forever ’twixt that darkness and that light.”

THE EMERGENCY OF OUR PRESENT DEFENCELESSNESS.

When we come to confront the further question of how we are to carry through to a successful conclusion the war upon which we seem to be embarking, it is again fitting that we should carry into this undertaking a spirit appropriate to the great democratic endeavor in which we are engaged.

It is a serious thing to go to war, but it is tenfold more serious to go to war with the mightiest military nation of the world. We sit here calmly discussing what we shall do, whether we shall prepare our whole strength or only a fraction of it. My friends, we should not be so calm except for a single circumstance not dependent upon the effort or credit of this country. In a sheltered harbor of the Hebrides, half hidden by mists of Scotland, lies some fifty grim vessels in their gray drab of war. Upon the shoulders of their com-

mander rests the most concentrated responsibility that has been borne by any man in this or any other war. So long as he is successful, so long as that fleet is intact, we can take our time. Should he fail or should the coalition of nations which is behind him fall apart or become weary of the war, we should not be holding mass-meetings of this sort. We should be scrambling for our lives as helpless as naked children before an armed man.

There is on file in the War College at Washington a document which has a direct bearing on this subject. It contains the calculations of our General Staff showing what Germany could do in such a contingency as that. It shows that, with her merchant marine as it was in 1914, within sixteen days after obtaining control of the sea, she could land upon our coast a force of 387,000 men and 81,000 animals, together with all the necessary arms and equipment for an invasion. It shows that in thirty days more that could be followed by a still larger expedition. And there has been recently published a letter of the late Admiral of our Navy—George Dewey—showing that there are very few places on our eastern coast—from Maine to Virginia—where such an expedition could not land with perfect ease.

In the path of such an invasion would lie the American fleet. Ten years ago our fleet was larger and stronger than that of Germany. But we learn now, on the potent authority of Admiral Fiske, that even by 1914 the German fleet had grown until it was twice as strong as our own and that during the war its construction has been progressing under pressure, while

ours has been virtually standing still. We also know that the German fleet is manned by veterans and that our fleet is today short some 40,000 men. In the face of such figures can any one say that prompt control of the sea against us by Germany would not be a mathematical probability?

Ah, but some one says, what nonsense! Neither Germany nor any foreign nation would be foolish enough to try to conquer so large a territory as the United States! Major Eric Wood, of the Reserve Corps, tells how, during the Autumn of 1914, he made just such a statement to an officer of the German Staff in Berlin. The German looked at him and quietly replied:

“It is true that your country is very large, but its heart is very small and very vulnerable and you must remember, my friend, that in nations as in individuals, the body falls if the heart is struck.”

Turning to an atlas he traced a line upon it which began at the mouth of the Chesapeake, ran thence up that waterway, up the Potomac River to its upper reaches, then across country through Maryland and Pennsylvania to Harrisburg, then along the Susquehanna to near Scranton, then across to Kingston, New York and by way of the Hudson, Lake George and Lake Champlain to Canada. That makes a line not much longer than the line which the Germans hold in France today. East of it lies a territory only half as large as what Germany holds of Russia today. In that strip of territory lie the national capital, the capitals of eleven states, our largest and richest cities and nearly all our munition plants, besides twenty-five millions of people. It embraces all the termini of our transcontinental railroads. It contains the political and commercial capi-

tals of the country and a very large percentage of its manufactories. Should this country be invaded today it would be the work of but a few weeks to seize that line and, once seized, it would be a far easier line to hold than the line which the Germans are now holding in France. The line in France has no natural barriers to make it defensive. The line in America has the great barriers of the Chesapeake, the Potomac, the Susquehanna, the Hudson, Lake Champlain and Lake George. Once fortified it could be held against our best efforts by a comparatively small force of German veterans.

My friends, have you ever considered the situation in which this country would find itself if such an invasion were made and was successful and the twenty-five millions behind that line reduced to the condition of the ten millions today in Belgium and Northern France? Or have you considered the means we have at hand to resist such an invasion today? Do you realize that out of our regular army, we have just one regiment of infantry and three squadrons of cavalry east of the Mississippi river, excluding, of course, the little garrisons that are in our harbor forts. This one regiment consists of less than 1,000 men and it is busy in Georgia watching some 700 German sailors who have been interned from the various German vessels now in our harbors.

Do you realize that if we should scrape together all of our mobile regular army throughout the United States, we could gather together less than 40,000 men and this would leave the Mexican border entirely unguarded?

Ah, but you say, how about the National Guard? Well we tried them last summer. The President called for 250,000 of them. After two months and a half strenuous work at recruiting, we mobilized 138,500 men. Less than 21% of that force know how to shoot and over 63% of it was virtually untrained in any useful drill.

The experience of the war in Europe shows that an infantry soldier uses up from two to three rifles a year. We have in this country less than 600,000 Springfield rifles. If we should raise a force of 500,000 additional men we should not have enough to give them one rifle apiece and our Government arsenals are turning them out at a rate which is barely enough to supply the wastage of our present regular army.

When we wanted a few Lewis machine guns for the force in Mexico last summer, we had to beg permission of the British Government to get 250 of them from the manufacturer in Syracuse who was under contract with that government. The war in Europe is being fought with heavy artillery of a calibre from 6 to 16 inches; we have practically nothing over 4.7 inches and very few of those. It takes a long time to make a modern howitzer.

The aeroplane is the eye of the modern army. An army without them, fighting against an army which has them, is like a blind man fighting against a man with sight. Hundreds of them literally are flying daily over the fighting lines in France in desperate effort to retain for their respective armies, control of the air. Whichever side has control of the air is able to advance and the other must yield. There are said to be

100,000 men in the flying corps of Great Britain today. In our own corps we have less than 1300 men and, nowhere in America, has an aeroplane been constructed up to today which would be a match against the regular battleplane on either side of the Von Hindenburg line.

These facts are not cited for the pleasure of making unpleasant statements. It is only by facing them that we can get the proper measure of our duty or learn the proper course which we must take. We are in a situation where our military system must be built up from the very foundation. Pressure will undoubtedly be brought to bear upon the Administration in favor of half-way measures on the plea that the emergency now upon us will not admit of anything better. There is particular danger that such a makeshift will take the form of patching up our discredited militia system with its division of control between the central and the state governments. This has been our undoing throughout our history and if we yield now to such a plea and trust our future defense to the State militia, we shall pay a bloody and costly price, not only in this war but in every national emergency.

Some people argue that it would be unwise to attempt to construct a thorough system during a time of national excitement from war, for fear lest, when the excitement is over, the system will be found galling to our people. I think that attitude of mind is radically and wholly mistaken. Our history has shown that our citizens habitually pay no attention, in time of peace, to even the most self-evident necessities of military policy. It is only when their attention is concentrated upon the subject by the interest of a war

that any reforms can be accomplished. Without any credit to ourselves, we have, by luck, slid through many military dangers during our happy-go-lucky youth. That situation cannot continue. We cannot hope to be perpetually exempt from the rules that apply to nations on this earth and sooner or later our time of real trial must come. It may be upon us within the next few months. Certainly there has never been a period in the history of the world when human institutions were being more bitterly tested, when unexpected things were happening so frequently and when there was need for such thorough-going efficiency and national self-sacrifice. Let us, therefore, work with our heads, with our hearts and with all our might! Let us put ourselves in a position to do effective work now and also let us build a system which will last and keep this nation ever ready to perform a man's part in this world.

CONCRETE MEASURES.

Let us frame our concrete measures with these purposes in view. In the first place, let us go swiftly to the assistance of the Allies. There could be no greater folly or greater disgrace than to try to go it alone in this war. The plain truth is, we have been dependent on the Allies for protection for two and a half years and are dependent upon them this moment more than ever. We should be in a fine position if the Allies should decide to stop fighting before Germany was through with us. And, my friends, do not let us deceive ourselves—whether we declare war or not, Germany, in her present temper against us, is not going

to be through with us until either we or the Allies make her ready to be through!

Let us go to their assistance then, first with money, for we are ready in respect to money, and then with men as soon as we can be ready with men. I have heard some people say that our part in this war is only to furnish money. What an ignoble proposal! After all we have said about Wall Street and the money power in time of peace, to propose to hide behind their skirts in time of war! Unless all signs fail, there is a man's job before this country in this war and let us face it in a man's way. If we are really fighting for democracy, let us fight for it with men. Let us show that Americans can die for it as well as Frenchmen. There are some things in this world which money cannot buy and one is the respect of freemen. Already I have seen in the press a statement of the French Minister of War that he confidently expects to have us send troops to their battle line. How would he and the millions of Frenchmen, who speak through him, feel towards a nation that went to war with money and stayed at home with men?

As soon as it can be prepared we should send an expeditionary force to France. It cannot be large but the result of sending it would not be measured by size. The influence which it would have in making both sides believe that we are in earnest and that we propose to bring this war to the right conclusion, would be greater than the influence of billions in money.

UNIVERSAL TRAINING.

So much for the first steps—the immediate steps. At the same time, we should begin laying the foundation of those measures upon which the ultimate safety of this country, not only in this war, but in all future wars, will rest. The measures I have been speaking of—the temporary measures, represent mere cost. They are expenditures in men and money which this country must make on the instant to protect its safety in the present crisis. The other measure, fortunately, is not a mere expenditure, it is an investment. It will bring returns in peace as well as in war; it will pay dividends in democracy, in health, in moral responsibility, as well as in physical safety. I mean the system of Universal Military Training for our youth. We should take this occasion, when our countrymen are considering national responsibilities as never before, to win their consent to the reestablishment of the great national measure of democracy upon which all others rest. It is not a new principle. One hundred and twenty-five years ago, under Washington's administration, universal training of all citizens between the ages of 18 and 45 was prescribed by the Statute of 1792. We have allowed that law to fall into disuse and to become a dead letter. While the science of war was advancing, making training in time of peace more and more necessary in order to wage successful war, we, in our imagined isolation, have been slackening up on even the little measure that we once had. The modern army of today resembles in organization and training our old armies of half a century ago about as much as the United States Steel Corporation, in organization and

training, resembles the old blacksmith shop of those same times. Yet we assume that it can be extemporized in the hurry of the swift movements that open modern war.

The only solution that can combine modern defense with modern democracy is the training, in their youth, of all citizens who are physically fit. That is the solution which has been making its way throughout the modern world. It is not a symptom of reaction. It is a sign of democracy. It has been adopted in Republics like France and Switzerland, Argentina and Chili, in free constitutional monarchies like Norway and Sweden and in the most radical commonwealths of the world like Australia and New Zealand. It represents the steady growth of an ideal in justice and fair play, namely, that he who has a voice in the selection of his own government is bound in honor to defend that government. It recognizes the fact that there is a great difference between compulsion to serve a sovereign and compulsion to serve a commonwealth and that, in the latter case, such action represents the deliberate, voluntary choice of the nation itself.

Some of our people fear that universal military training means militarism; it means just the reverse. It is the way in which the professional soldier—the man who spends his life in planning and thinking about war—is reduced to the lowest possible number in the nation. Under the old system—the system of a regular professional army, such professionals constituted the entire army and their presence in the nation constituted a possible disturbing element whose aims and ambitions were at variance with those of their fellow-citizens. Under the new system of universal training,

the place of these men is taken by men who learn the art of national defense as a part of their regular education and then, after the period of training is over, at once become merged in the general citizenship of the nation. Thereafter these men have no special leaning towards war. Their subsequent ties, habits and ambitions lead in the same peaceful direction as those of their fellow-citizens. It is just as much of a personal wrench for them to pull loose and go to war as it is for men who have not been trained and, one effect of their training is to make more vivid to them the dangers and discomforts of warfare. Under the new system, the only body of professional soldiers left in the nation is the comparatively small group of officers and non-commissioned officers who perform the function of instructing others. Whether such a nucleus can become a source of militarism or not depends upon the attitude of the nation towards that nucleus and not upon the system itself. If, through the influence of a kingly system and a false philosophy, they are treated as a privileged and ruling caste, as in Germany, the danger may become real; if, on the contrary, they live constantly under the Anglo-Saxon tradition that the military authority is ever subject to the civil, as here, the danger is wholly imaginary. Militarism has come in Germany from the attitude of the nation towards the soldier and not from the attitude of the soldier towards the nation.

From the standpoint of our ordinary civil life, in time of peace, this country needs the benefits of such a system more than almost any of the countries which have already adopted it.

In our national development, we have focussed our attention upon the rights, the privileges, the benefits which we have expected to get from free government and we have paid scant attention to the duties and obligations and the sacrifices which went with them. We are now, for the first time, beginning to realize how far we have fallen behind other nations in this respect. The searching test of the European war has put its finger squarely upon this weak spot of our American democracy. For the first time we have had revealed to us in blinding light the fact that men of other nations have been willing to give towards the building up of the efficiency of their nations a measure of time and personal effort which we have been unwilling to give.

We are a composite nation. We have been inspired by the noble hope of making this land a home of freedom and equal opportunity for all races. And into our land there has been pouring a great stream of immigration composed largely of men who never had the lesson in loyalty to American institutions which was instilled into our fathers by the wars, the privations and the common experiences of our national growth. Many of these men have come here, not to assume, but to escape a national duty. Many of them have very imperfect notions of responsibility towards the state, let alone the duty of sleepless vigilance required for the preservation of liberty. We have taken them on faith; we have given them everything we have, in the way of freedom and political power and we have given them very little in the way of care or education in the duties which went with that freedom and power. We have apparently expected that they would learn the difficult art of self-government by merely breathing

our free air without effort on our own part and we are beginning to learn our mistake. We have had some ugly revelations of the imperfect way in which our existing institutions have performed the duty of assimilating such immigrants. We have found that there were among us some citizens who either loved or hated other countries more than they loved this one. Could there be a better way found to bring home to our foreign born citizens and their children the duty of loyalty to this country and the fact that free government has responsibilities, as well as privileges, than to have their children learn that lesson, shoulder to shoulder with our native born youth?

Nor, would the lesson come amiss to the native born. The cult of irresponsibility and disobedience is widespread and popular in our land today. Many an American mother raises her children upon the theory that they must be forever sheltered against the performance of disagreeable duty, without recognizing that she is levelling a deadlier blow at the institutions of her country than the most ignorant alien mother, who lands on our shores. As a result, crime is seven times more prevalent in this country today, in proportion to the population, than it was even sixty years ago. No better thing could be done for the average American boy than to have him spend a little time in learning to do things that are difficult, in obeying orders promptly and unquestioningly because they come from proper authority and in thus learning, through self-control, the only method of eventual leadership.

Again in the United States our present militia system has produced peculiar difficulties between labor and

capital. The fact that our states have had constantly at hand an unpaid militia force, has tempted them to use it in labor troubles as a substitute for a paid police force. This has been an unmitigated evil. It has resulted in every petty riot being treated as an insurrection. Upon untrained citizens with deadly weapons in their hands has been thrown a duty which could be much more effectively and humanely performed by a policeman with a club. We have thus not only failed to maintain law and order, but we have produced among our working classes a feeling that citizen soldiers represent capital and are being maintained for the purpose of being used against labor. We have thus alienated from the great duty of national defense the very men of the country who have most to suffer in case of a foreign invasion and who should be the back-bone of our military defense.

Universal training under federal instead of state control would, at one stroke, wipe out this evil and do more towards restoring democratic relations between capital and labor, between rich and poor, than almost any of the industrial reforms which are now being agitated. On the other hand, to continue our present militia system is to continue and encourage a sore in our body politic, out of which great danger is ultimately sure to come.

Finally, there is the consideration of health and sturdiness of character. During the past century, the habits of life of our people have been revolutionized. Instead of an outdoor race, ninety per cent. of whom lived upon the farm or in the forest, we are rapidly becoming an indoor nation. The effect of this change

is becoming startlingly apparent in the records of our school children.

Universal military training, of the kind which is now proposed by the Chamberlain bill, pending before Congress, namely, outdoor training in the field for a period of six months, would go a long way towards correcting some of the evil effects of this indoor life. It was in consideration of these facts that the Medical Association at its convention in Washington passed resolutions strongly endorsing universal military training for this country and almost every intelligent physician is in favor of it.

Most of the objections which I have heard made to universal training have been based upon some misapprehension. For one thing, we do not propose that the federal government should enter our schools and train the children there. This involves a complete misconception of function. School education is under the control of the states—national defense under the federal government. Learning this duty of defense is a function of young manhood—not of childhood and should take place out in the open air and not in the schools, and all in one consecutive period. When the training is accomplished it is over. The interruption to productive occupation is ended. Incidentally the benefit through this training in health and habits of responsibility and in general economic value, will, in the end, far outweigh the loss from the interruption. Figures show that the Prussian boy gains five years in expectation of life over his untrained competitors of the same class in the community.

Again, the expense of the proposal has been very much overestimated. We should immensely gain in

economy by transferring the military policy of this country from a basis of pay to a basis of duty and patriotism. The item of pay for the regular army has hitherto constituted about one-half of our one hundred million dollar budget. Under the militia system of our present law, we pay the militiaman, when in service, at the same rate as the regular and, in addition to that, we pay him during the year for armory drills. It cost us for the six months, ending January 1, 1917, over 190 millions of dollars to mobilize the National Guard upon the Mexican border and we got very little good from it in the way of training or trained men. On the other hand, Major General Leonard Wood has laid before the Senate Committee figures showing that the current expenses of training for six months the estimated 500,000 youth of this nation who reach the age of training, and who are physically fit, would be in the neighborhood of Ninety millions of dollars.

The Chamberlain bill proposes a training period of six months for the youth of this country. In that respect it follows the conclusions of the General Staff embodied in a careful report in 1912, in which it was stated that, assuming competent instructors and a proper Staff Organization, such a period would be sufficient to create a respectable army. Since that date, the experience at Plattsburgh, so far as it has gone, has served powerfully to confirm the views then enunciated by the General Staff. Undoubtedly a man can be better trained in one year than in six months. But at all events, the recruit in six months would receive over 1200 hours of training as against the 192 hours of training per year now required of the militia by our

present Statute and would, therefore, have more than six times as much training as is received per year by the present cornerstone of our citizen defense.

In short, I can see no valid objection to the establishment of the system in this country. It would be a great undertaking. It would test our resolution and our intelligence in getting away from false habits and thoughts. But I believe it would be the salvation of our democracy. I have no patience with those who fear it is at variance with the ideals of progress. It is at variance only with the false notions of democracy held by men whose grasp on reality is feeble. With the only possible democracy—democracy in this plain old world of ours with all its limitations of human nature—universal military training is not only consistent, but is the only basis upon which such a democracy can safely rest. It is one of the surest levellers of undemocratic distinction. It is one of the most certain means by which the modern boy can be brought face to face with both the hard and the noble facts of real life. It is the only way in which some boys can experience the elemental facts of hunger, cold, exhaustion or may learn of the vital stores of energy, grit and courage by which such evils may be met. It is one of the surest ways to learn the nobility which underlies our common American nature. It is the simplest method in which we may learn, at its foundation and in a manner never to be forgotten, the duty of the individual to the state and the flag which symbolizes the state.

Europa war, 1914-1918 - U.S.
U.S. - Defenses.

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